10: d'Orleans--262-263 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 513, 563, 825 Ethnic subgroups

"Our men [LSS: Kha from Laos] lie down upon mats and this evinces a more advanced stage of civilisation than we have found amongst the Thaïs; in the middle of the night they suddenly jump up, [263] light a lamp and start in search of an animal, that has taken flight, to judge from their movements, though I do not see it. They afterwards explain their manœuvres; one of them had seen a long myriapod, which they were anxious to destroy, as it is a dangerous insect. They say, that when it crawls over the skin it leaves traces of its passage, in long red painful and unhealthy streaks. I do not know whether this assertion is true, but at all events, they seem much afraid of the insect."

10: d'Orleans--282-283 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 136, 825

"In the middle of the night we are suddenly awakened by a loud voice, which sounds from a corner of the room, from the ceiling, or from a neighbouring tree: Tako, tako...ken, ken, ken...oh, oh, followed by a kind of hoarse laugh. The first time it is heard, we are astonished, and find some difficulty in sleeping again; we look about but cannot discover anything. After a little while, we become accustomed to the songs of the hidden guest, who speaks at night in every Laotian house. The natives know it well; sometimes they see it and point it out during the day, but they respect it as a sacred being, a household friend. An idea of protection, a veneration that is even a little superstitious, is attached to its presence in a house....I see that in speaking of the singer I am acquainted with, I have forgotten the important point of introducing it to the reader. The takou (so called by onomatopœia) is simply a [283] large green jecko (cordylus), about a cubit long and three fingers wide, ocellated with beautiful spots of azure blue; a great insect destroyer, but quite harmless to man, by whom it is regarded as a friend."

10: d'Orleans--345 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 415, 825

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]
"As in Tonkin and Japan, at the boys' fête, many people carry paper bags made to imitate fish, while streamers with designs of animals upon them are used for certain games."

68: Mouhot--91-92 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
116, 136, 825

"Beetles of the longicorn tribe abound here; [HD: at Khao-Khoc, Siam, inhabited mainly by Laotians] and to-day I have filled a box with more than a thousand new or rare insects. I have even been [92] fortunate enoguh [sic] to replace some of the more valuable kinds which were destroyed or injured by sea-water on board the 'Sir James Brooke.' The villagers come every day to bring me 'beasts,' as they call them, grasshoppers, scorpions, serpents, tortoises, &c., all presented to me at the end of a stick."

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

slaughterers are obliged to work by flares, which is responsible, the French think, for an unusually picturesque effect. It is 'not done' to go along while the actual killing is in progress, but shortly after, when the carcasses are suspended from hooks to be cut up, and the workers, stripped to their loincloths, and garishly splashed, paddle about in a vermilion sea. Cars are stationed just beyond the reach of the steaming odours, and one is recommended to see the thing as one views a nude in a picture gallery – that is, divorced from all but a disinterested abstraction, in this case the colour.

The possibilities of Vientiane, it was clear, would be quickly exhausted. Thao Nhouy, the Laotian Minister of Education, lent me his jeep to see some of the surrounding villages, but the roads were so appalling that it broke down after being driven for about five miles. He then suggested that I might like to see the local schoolgirls dancing, and when I said that I would be delighted, and asked for permission to take photographs, the girls were sent off home, on their bicycles, to get their best clothes. An hour or two later they began to trickle back, wearing their mothers' jewellery as well as their own and with their silk finery done up in paper parcels. When they had dressed and were ready they made a glittering sight. One girl wore a scarf ornamented with real gold thread said to be worth about £50 in English money. They danced under the supervision of a teacher whom I recognized as a professional actor, from the *boun*,[1] and who occasionally intervened when a girl failed in some minor feat, such as bending her fingers back at an expressive ninety degrees from the palm.

All these girls, dressed as they were like princesses, came from shacks in the forest. Each one had a bicycle – infallibly fitted with dynamo lighting, and sometimes 3-speed gears. It seems that a bicycle for his daughter is one of the essentials for which a Laotian will work. It is considered ill-bred and irreligious in Laos to work more than is necessary. The father of a family cultivates an amount of land, estimated, by a bonze who is expert in such matters, to be

[1] [i.e., Laotian religious festival. --Analyst]

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

000 eventually to the Buddhas to solicit their curative powers; and if so what we should learn from it about the prevalence of disease among Europeans.

217 532 771 The museum of Vientiane, which I visited in the hope of learning something of the living art of the country, has also little more to show than a collection of Buddhas. There is a tranquillity, a lack of compulsion in the Hinayanist Buddhism of Cambodia and Laos — so different from the neurotic deformation practised by the later Khmer kings — which is not propitious to the development of religious art. There was no violence or drama in the life of Buddha comparable to that of Christ, and the Indian Epics have been eschewed in Laos as improperly secular. It has been enough to carve Buddhas, and more Buddhas *ad infinitum*, seeking perhaps to multiply in this way the magic virtues which each image contains. The curator takes you round, explaining the characteristic postures — there are seven or eight — all of which can be appreciated in five minutes. After that there are minute differences of physique and physiognomy to be noted that reflect the influences of India, of Java, of Thibet or of Ceylon. That is all.

177 532 782 By the time the museums turn to the art of the people, the grotesque animals in bamboo, the carved movable figures which are obscene to European eyes — all of which become a pagan burnt-offering at the end of each *boun*[1] — it will be too late. The microphone is an infallible sign of what is to come. Nothing of this kind will survive the era of materialism, under whatever form it arrives.

253 825 These are the sights of Vientiane, but in addition there is a spectacle which is popular with Europeans, who, remote, isolated, and living under difficulties, tend to shut themselves up within the protective social rituals of people in exile.

This spectacle is the slaughterhouse at work. I do not know whether or not it is illegal in Laotian law to kill animals, but certainly it is thought shameful, and the killing for Europeans is done at the dead of night on the outskirts of the town. The

[1] [Laotian religious festival. -- Analyst] 254

149: Reinach--229 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

[313]

Crustaceans

136 The crayfish, the shrimp and the crab.

Mollusks

Mollusks are very numerous, and a few types are even peculiar to Laos. They include acephalans, lamellibranchiates, gastropods, etc., several of which are edible (1).

[114]

(1) A complete study of the mollusks of Laos was made by M. Pavie and Commander Morlet (their collections are to be seen in the Paris Museum).

Insects

Because of their great numbers and infinite variety, insects have a very interesting, or at least important, place in the fauna of Laos. Despite their small size and weak vocal organs as individuals, when evening comes their collective cries produce a noise which covers all others.

There is still a fine harvest for the entomologist to reap, even after Mouhot, who was the first to make studies of this type in Laos. Lepidoptera, coleoptera, hemiptera, diptera, arachnida--all the types are represented, in the form of many-colored butterflies, brilliant fireflies, hideous, foul-smelling bugs, hardy beetles, dangerous scorpions, scolopendra with a thousand feet, repulsive spiders which are huge and hairy, and finally indefatigable suctoria such as mosquitos, flies, gnats, etc.

825 There are only two types of useful insects. These are the coccus which produces crimson lake or stick-lac, and several kinds of bees which supply honey and wax.

The greater part of all this animal life which we have passed in review is used by the inhabitants of Laos for food and other needs. It also provides certain products in the form of animal remains which are the basis for either local or export trade. A list of these follows:

825 Elephant.....Ivory, teeth, toenails, bones, hide.
Tiger.....Pelts, talons, fangs, bones.
136 [314] Rhinoceros.....Hide, horns.
Bear.....Skins, gall (used in medicines).
Goat, otter, cayman.....Hides and skins.
Scaly anteater.....Scales and skin.
Buffalo, ox, stag, deer.....Hides, horns and antlers.
Peacock, marabon stork
and other birds.....Feathers.
Snakes.....Skins and venom.
Coccus (insect).....Crimson lake.
Bees.....Honey and wax.

3. MINERALOGY

a) Mineral Wealth

135 As we said above, the geological formations of Laos are similar in nature, rate of change and transformations undergone to those in the neighboring countries on the west, northwest and south. Everywhere there is the same original substratum, and this, together with the sediments which have formed in its folds, has been traversed, lifted and dislocated by volcanic thrusts which are less and less apparent as one moves away from the two eruptive nuclei located in the northwest and south, that is to say in Tibet and Malaysia. To be sure, the orographic nucleus which has had the greatest influence on the relief of the country and the formation of the various regions of Laos is the one which, in Tibet, has produced the long ridges of mountains between which the valleys of the great rivers of China, Burma and the Indo-Chinese peninsula have cut their paths.

In the basin of the Mekong, the only one with which we need be concerned here, there are secondary ridges brought about by partial upheavals or folds, which form a series of stepped plateaus and chains of valleys eminently suited to catching the sediment carried down from the peaks and to furthering its distribution in accordance with the laws of gravity. It is to this peculiar disposition that Laos owes its mineral wealth. During the course of centuries the partial dislocations, atmospheric agents, moving waters, etc. disaggregated, split and reduced [315] to stones, and then into gravel and soil, the mountain crests of eruptive rocks which contained gold, precious stones, silver-bearing galena, tin, copper, iron, etc. Once set free

Hunting

224 Hunting, for the inhabitants of Laos, is another form of scavenging, since it procures them either live animals or the remains of the same without any great labor or expense.

411 For the Laotian, time does not count. He makes his powder himself, and with the exception of firearms his hunting devices are also 224 of his own fabrication. With the help of this far from perfect equipment he is nevertheless able to capture live elephants and to procure the ivory and remains of those which he kills, as well as the hide, [438 talons, bones and horns of a multitude of other animals. All these 262] products are so many trade commodities for him. The flesh of all these animals, moreover, makes a sizeable contribution to the diet of the Laotian hunter. It is a feast for him, for his family and for his entourage.

• [825] [344] The natives have a perfect knowledge of the habits and customs of all the representatives of the local fauna. Patient, adroit, 224 endowed with excellent powers of hearing and sight which are further developed and sharpened by practice, they are not afraid to attack the tiger and other large animals despite their rudimentary weapons.

Lying hidden for hours at a time, motionless and silent and abstaining from smoking, the hunter waits for his victim without losing his self-control. When it approaches within a few meters of him, his sure eye and untrembling arm enable him to strike it dead with a bullet or with a poisoned arrow shot from a powerful crossbow.

One is astounded at the results achieved with weapons which are so imperfect, as much by their rudimentary construction as by their age, and which often lead one to fear more for the hunter's life than for the beast's. We must admire these men who, although reputed to be cowardly, brave danger with such primitive weapons and go in search of wild animals in their very lairs, killing them at almost point-blank range so that oftentimes the wad from the gun singes the animal's fur or the arrow goes in one side and out the other.

411 The firearms used by the Laotians are flintlock or muzzle-loading 439 rifles, some of which are of Siamese or Burmese manufacture. Others are imported from Europe through trade or in private cargoes. There are also old regulation rifles, British and others, chiefly those which bear the image of a cock and the word "Tower" stamped on the lock or breech.

231 654 It is much to be desired that the work of our physiologists may finally be successful and place at the disposal of everyone serums which will be capable of fighting the epizootic diseases which are decimating horned animals. In the meantime our administrators can only recommend to the natives a few rules of veterinary hygiene, a feeble protective measure against the epidemic. They should be particularly careful to see that dead carcasses are not thrown into watercourses.

231 492 262 825 Oxen. In Laos, oxen are raised mainly for use in transport or for export as animals for slaughtering. In the far north they are also harnessed to carts.

The Laotians have an instinctive repugnance for beef meat, and eat it only when an animal dies by accident or has to be killed as the result of a wound or broken bone. There are even certain prejudices and certain customs in this matter, which are doubtless vestiges of another age when the ancestors of the present-day inhabitants were pastoral people among whom slaughtering [404] oxen for food was prohibited under penalty of a fine.

231 Whereas the buffalo in Laos are sturdy and of a fine height, the oxen often leave much to be desired. This is due to the fact that the natives raise oxen as they do buffalo, that is to say by leaving it to forage for itself. Although the buffalo, a hardy and autochthonous animal, requires almost no care in breeding, the ox, which is a cross-bred animal, imported and not so tough, requires a great deal of care and management. But when ox raising is treated like buffalo raising, the result is an inferior product and thence a progressive degeneration of the breed.

The Youns, the Lus and the Burmese are the only ones who have a complete mastery of raising oxen as draft and pack animals, and who produce individuals of comparatively tall stature which are sturdy, courageous and resistant to fatigue. They are even able, thanks to suitable treatment and care, to condition and train the often puny specimens which they sometimes go great distances to buy, even into southern Laos.

231 439 The oxen of Song-Khone (1) and of the Kham-Thong-Niai-Saravane region are destined mainly to be sold for meat in Cambodia and in Cochinchina, and this is quite a lucrative trade.

(1) In 1898 the presence of about 1,500 oxen and cattle was reported in this province.

734 friend take one's place.

Laotians when they pay a visit to a sick person, prattle noisily,
574 ask the sick person a great number of unnecessary questions, and
576 sometimes tell him stories to cheer him up. This custom must stop. The patient, who is tired, needs rest. The visit one pays him should not last longer than ten minutes.

574 Condolence visit.--The Laotian ceremony connected with
576 the condolence visit is the opposite of the Western ceremony. The
764 The visitor, instead of appearing sad before the family of the deceased, is gay and smiling.

In order to give you an idea of what goes on in a house in which a death has taken place among the Laotians, I shall content myself by citing here certain passages from my article, "The custom
764 of funeral ceremonies in the land of Laos" (1): "Those who believe
574
576

1. In Kinnary, No. 4, November, 1946.

in the existence of the phi place a tray of food intended for the deceased near the coffin. Furthermore they place, at the head of the coffin, a sword marked with a cross with chalk, together with a superstitious formula in order to prevent the phi from stealing the coffin away from the deceased. The coffin has to be watched over day and night. The watchers talk, play certain games, or engage in any other diversion. /274/

/825/ "In the course of this watch cats are also prevented from prowling around the coffin. A cat which were to jump across would provoke the resurrection of the dead person, according to what certain people say.

"The house in which the person has died is called heuan di (happy house). There one works, sings, dances, and plays. From it can be heard the sound of orchestras and shouts of joy. Such spectacles have something disconcerting about them to the eyes of strangers. Nevertheless, one should not regard this behavior as a sign of irreverence towards the deceased person. Despite its smiling appearance, the family of the deceased suffers profoundly. It abstains from violent shedding of tears and from public lamentations because it considers a discreet grief more dignified and the sense one has of death in this way a nobler one."

/779/ It would be difficult not to respect this tradition which stems

301 The use of these magic shirts is also known in Cambodia. The designs
262 usually consist of flowers, geometric figures, tools, flowers, vegetable
751 branches, and of animals. Sometimes pictures drawn from Buddhist iconography can be recognized.

[174] Apparently the origin of tattooing is to be found in totemism. By
301 analyzing the Laotian tattooing designs, [63] it has been possible to recognize traces of sun worship, as well as the mythological role of the dog. But at the present time Laotians seem only to value tattooing as an artistic ornament.

The Divining Rod.

787 Among the curios which the tourist looks for in Laos, the most
823 easily found is a carved bamboo cane. Immediately below the head,
825 which is often of chased silver, there is a sort of checkered diagram made up of twenty-five little squares. Below this divining diagram are found, in succession from top to bottom, a zebu, a horse, a rakshasha or ogre, a tiger, a buffalo, a deer, an elephant. These animals correspond respectively to the days of the week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

It should be noted that, except for the buffalo and the deer, the others are the symbolical animals of the zodiac and correspond to the different cardinal points.

The Laotians consult these figures at different actions of their lives: choice of a wedding day, the hour for burial, etc. The diagram is used to calculate the hour, and the animals indicate the cardinal point which should be followed.

This cane is also found among the Man.

[64] THE NEW YEAR AND THE FEASTS OF THE FIFTH MONTH

527 The Laotian New Year always takes place between the 6th day
805 of the crescent moon of the 5th month and the 5th day of the crescent moon of the 6th month. The very core of the feast includes three days: the last day of the past year, the intermediate day and the New Year's day, properly so-called. The most picturesque ceremonies are those of Luang Prabang, for there tradition has been best preserved.

527 The programme of the feasts begins with a procession of royal elephants. Their heads ornamented with red and black painted designs, their drivers dressed in red tunics with yellow lapels, on their backs, the fifteen elephants go to the pagodas of Xieng Tong, Vat

May, and Vat Visun to render homage to the protecting genii of the village and chase away the evil spirits. 527

During three days the Laotians do no cooking. Fish, turtles, birds, etc., are bought in the big market and then set free as a sign of penitence and redemption of sins committed either voluntarily or not against living beings during the past year. 782

Possibly there is here a survival of the origin of the cycle of animals. According to Finot, at a very remote period, the custom of curing sick children by letting an animal go free had arisen. When a child was saved in this manner, he was said to have been born from this animal because he owed it life. He was forbidden to kill it, and the year of the child's birth was given the same [65] name as the animal. It is thus that the cycle of twelve years was established. 825 771

In the dry beds of the Mekong and of the Nam Khan, small that made of sand are built. Each one wishes the other a long life, whose number of years will equal the number of grains of sand forming the that, and great prosperity, for ill-luck has fled with the last day of the past year, and the New Year should bring as many riches as there are grains of sand in the that. Often around the principal that, other much smaller ones are erected, their number corresponding to the age of the builder. They express the wish of the one who has built them that he will see many more years added to those he has already lived. Actually these little that around the central mound are a reproduction of Mount Merou surrounded by different worlds (Cf. the symbolism of the That Luang). 527 805

In the pagodas the statues of Buddha are taken down from the altars and placed in little wooden prasat. They are sprinkled with perfumed water which flows in the hang-lin (a kind of gutter of gilded wood whose extremities represent the head of an aquatic monster), for the year now ending must be completely exhausted, and a minute cleansing, both material and spiritual, must leave a strictly clear way for the New Year. In the streets the young girls sprinkle not only the bonzes whom they honor, but all the young men, to compensate for all the minor vexations they have endured from the men during the past year. The high dignitaries are not exempt from these showers of more or less clean water. Sometimes their faces are rubbed with lampblack or mud, when they have the ill luck of meeting a group of young girls. Do we have a survival of the theme of the svayamvara here (free choice of the man by the young girl)? [562]

[66] The day in between, the day before New Year's day, is one of complete rest. All the events which occur during this day will determine

527 805 the course of the year for good or for bad. On the day of the New Year, a basi is offered to His Majesty the King by the ministers and high dignitaries. Then a delegation of bonzes is admitted to the palace where, after receiving the ritual offerings, they are sprinkled in a cabin by His Majesty the King and members of the royal family.

Outside in the town the aspersions continue more than ever during [643] the whole week. During these feasts the King goes in a dugout to the grottoes of Xieng Men, opposite Luang Prabang, and to those of Pak Ou where he sprinkles the statues there. Then he comes to make the ritual aspersion of the Phra Bang, palladium of the kingdom, at the pagoda of Vat May.

527 773 During these feasts of the New Year, the dance of the Phou Gneu Gna Gneu takes place. These are legendary individuals considered the ancestors of the Laotians, whose story is as follows:

When Phou Lan Xong had pierced the gourd, the king of heaven sent his son Khoum Bolom to organize the country. While he was performing the mission entrusted to him by his father, a vine was seen to rise from the earth. It grew rapidly and soon covered the whole world with its shadow. Men ceased to see the sky and were deprived of light and heat. The king ordered this monstrous vine to be cut down, but nobody dared to risk doing this. Finally an aged couple [deux vieux époux] Phou Thao Gneu and Me Ngam, armed with a hatchet and preceding the son of heaven, came down to earth, announced that they were willing to undertake this perilous task. But they stipulated that after their death they would receive offerings and would be invoked at the beginning of meals and other business. Everybody [67] agreed to this. Then they attacked the vine with blows of the hatchet. At the end of three months and three days, the vine fell and crushed them in its fall, but the sun shone again on the world.

The agreement has been kept. Since that day the dance of the Phou Gneu Gna Gneu is one of the principal elements of the Laotian feast of the New Year.

527 825 The two dancers wear enormous cardboard masks. They listen on their knees to prayers read aloud to them, while alongside of them a lion waves its paws nonchalantly. This lion has rather a peculiar role. Apparently it is another survival of the legend of the cycle of animals. Not having any toys to give their children, the first ancestors had the idea of modeling one year a rat, another year an ox, then a tiger, a hare, a dragon, etc. The name of each animal designated the year during which it was used as a toy. Finally these little figures became alive and became the ancestors of the present day species. At

the present time only the lion is kept, for apparently its role is no longer very well known. 527 825

[68] THE HARVEST FESTIVAL

This takes place after the harvest, during the first and second months, and is held in the open countryside. Its purpose is to glorify "the soul of rice." 527 243

It is not until the threshing has been completed and the rice piled up in heaps that the master of the harvest consults his neighbors and chooses with them the day of celebration. Light shelters must then be built on his field around the threshing area to accommodate the guests. On the top of the pile of paddy a sort of pulpit is erected from which the bonzes will recite their prayers.

On the morning of the feast day, the master of the house slaughte an ox from which is made the traditional lap, a dish consisting of raw meat and chopped up peppers mixed with various chopped up green vegetables the whole held together with a soup of pa dek. In the evening a court of love is held and the mo lam (professional singers) are also invited. At the end of this first night, the bonzes climb into the pulpit before daybreak to read the legend of Nang Kho Sop. 527 773

"In the olden days a grain of rice was as big as a gourd. It was cut down with an axe. Then Nang Kho Sop (the soul of rice) became angry at this barbarous treatment and flew away. Since then this feast has been celebrated so that the soul will return."

The reading closes as day breaks, and offerings are made to the bonzes. At the close of the prayer, each one of the faithful, before rising, sprinkles a few drops of water on the ground so that Nang Thorani may bear witness to their alms and so that the goddess may not forget to count it among the merits he has acquired for his future lives.

[69] The owner takes a basket filled with boiled chicken, alcohol, sweet potatoes, and all kinds of tuberous roots. He goes by himself into his rice field and walks over it in every direction, at the same time calling the soul of rice to thank it for having made his fields bear fruit and to beg it to continue being equally generous to him in future years. He offers it all the food in the basket saying: Soul of Rice, here are tuberous roots for thee, here are buds of cabbage palm, and good alcohol made from thy grain. Soul of Rice, descend on us and preside over the feast I am giving in thy honor! 243 527